



Tourism North Annual General Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 7th, 2015
Heritage North Museum, Thompson

Present: Bunny Burke, CF Greenstone (TN Board)
Charlene Kissick, CF North Central Development (TN Board)
Darryl Villeneuve, MB Tourism Secretariat
Joe Cote, CF Cedar Lake (TN Board)
Paul Desjardin, Thompson Unlimited (TN Board)
Geetanjali Pagare, Thompson Unlimited
Tanna Teneycke, Heritage North Museum
Vicki Flemming, TN Volunteer, Wabowden
Lorie Nelson, CF Greenstone
Bonnie Bishop, Spirit Way
Volker Beckmann, Spirit Way
Keith McDonald, Thompson Chamber of Commerce
Michelle Wallis, MB Tourism Secretariat
Marion Morberg, Spirit Way
Penny Byer, Boreal Discovery Centre / City of Thompson
Dawn Sands, City of Thompson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order at 10:30 pm by Tourism North Chairperson Bunny Burke.

2. ROLL CALL

Roundtable introductions.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: Moved by Joe Cote to approve agenda. **Second by Charlene Kissick.**

CARRIED

4. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES (April 2014)

MOTION: Moved by Charlene Kissick to approve April 2014 annual general meeting minutes. **Second by Joe Cote.**

CARRIED

5. REPORTS

5.1 Chairperson's Report

Bunny Burke provided comments, noting serving double duty as Chairperson and Treasurer due to challenges with membership.

5.2 Coordinator Report

Charlene Kissick provided a written report in meeting package and reviewed verbally. The report is included as an attachment to the meeting minutes.

5.3 Treasurer's Report

Bunny Burke provided an Interim Balance Sheet (as at 03/31/2015), an Income Statement (04/01/2014 – 03/31/2015) and General Ledger Report of all expenses (04/01/2014 to 03/31/2015). As in previous years, the Province of MB, Rural Regional Tourism Initiative provided an annual operating grant and a further allocation of funds to carry out a development project equating to a total annual revenue of \$53,750. Tourism North partners showed in-kind contributions totaling \$44,038. Tourism North is left showing a small surplus for the year of \$1,462.32. Kendall Pandya Chartered Accountants are preparing financial statements which will be provided to the Tourism Secretariat.

5.4 Nominating Committee Report

Joe Cote explained the challenge currently experienced with limited board representation. The executive positions are:

- Chair: Bunny Burke filled the Chair position for Tourism North this fiscal year, doing double duty and also carrying out Treasurer related responsibilities. Bunny has indicated she would let her name stand for the position of Treasurer.
- Vice Chair: this position has been vacant in recent years due to limited membership. The position was held for a short time this year by Douglas Genaille. Douglas is no longer a Tourism North rep.
- Secretary: Held by Charlene Kissick this fiscal year and she would let her name stand for this position.

**MOTION: Moved by Paul Desjardin to accept all reports (Chairperson, Coordinator, Treasurer and Nominating Committee). Second by Joe Cote.
CARRIED**

6. BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Tourism North, throughout the 2014/2015 fiscal year focused on amending the organizational bylaws to reflect an open member structure which would address noted challenges with quorum, officer positions, geographic representation, etc. The proposed bylaws were included in the meeting package.

**MOTION: Moved by Joe Cote to accept revised bylaws as presented.
Second by Paul Desjardin.
CARRIED.**

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

7.1 Chairperson

MOTION: Moved by Bunny Burke to nominate Joe Cote for the position of Chairperson. Second by Charlene Kissick.

CARRIED

Joe let his name stand for the position of Chairperson. Nominations were called three times and no further nominations were made. Joe Cote was acclaimed as Chairperson.

7.2 Vice Chair

MOTION: Moved by Joe Cote to nominate Paul Desjardin for the position of Vice Chairperson. Second by Charlene Kissick.

CARRIED

Paul let his name stand for the position of Vice Chairperson. Nominations were called three times and no further nominations were made. Paul Desjardin was acclaimed as Vice Chairperson.

7.3 Treasurer

MOTION: Moved by Joe Cote to nominate Bunny Burke for the position of Treasurer. Second by Charlene Kissick.

CARRIED

Bunny let her name stand for the position of Treasurer. Nominations were called three times and no further nominations were made. Bunny Burke was acclaimed as Treasurer.

7.4 Secretary

MOTION: Moved by Bunny Burke to nominate Charlene Kissick for the position of Secretary. Second by Joe Cote.

CARRIED

Charlene let her name stand for the position of Secretary. Nominations were called three times and no further nominations were made. Charlene Kissick was acclaimed as Secretary.

8. 2015 / 2016 WORKPLAN

Charlene will prepare 2015/2016 Operating Plan, using the 5-year strategic plan that was created in May 2013 and based on priorities set at the Tourism North interim strategic planning meeting (July 6th) and considering information gathered during today's AGM (brainstorm session on the north's greatest assets and main challenges). Priorities set include:

a. Governance & Administration:

Contracting CFNCD to provide coordinator services for 2015/2016 fiscal year including all areas of governance (ie: meetings, planning session, drafting operating plan, annual return of information, reporting to the Tourism Secretariat, etc.). Tourism North's intent is continue working on identified actions from the current strategic plan. Goals fall in line with RRTI priorities (Industry Engagement, Development, Visitor Information Services, Training

and Marketing). Looking to next fiscal year, with an expanded membership, Tourism North would like to hold a more formal strategic planning session which may identify new priorities.

- b. Tasks related to new bylaw implementation:
Such as drafting membership policy, fee structures, conducting membership drive.
- c. Winter Destination Development project implementation:
As per the approved project through the Tourism Development Fund.
- d. Northern Ambassador project:
Conduct a pilot in partnership with the City of Thompson Local & Regional Identity Committee.
- e. Visitor Information Services / Marketing review:
Conduct a review of all current Tourism North and other regional visitor information services to identify gaps and opportunities.
- f. Visitor Information Services:
 - Continue on annual basis publishing the Northern Manitoba Visitor guide and generating revenue for the organization.
 - Continue with social media efforts.

ACTION: Charlene to update Tourism North's Goals & Objectives table with 2015/2016 fiscal year actions.

9. ROUNDTABLE:

Tanna Teneycke, Heritage North Museum

The Museum in Thompson is on the front lines of visitor services, being a Travel MB Visitor Centre. This is often a stop for visitors, where they gather their information, who they express concern too, etc. It is one of the few organizations with the ability to capture statistics on visitation (how many visitors annually, where they are coming from, when they visit, etc). Tanna noted last summer was horrific for visitors travelling by rail, many challenges with the service disruptions. Noted that visitors often aren't aware of the City's plastic bag ban. Being a Travel MB Visitor Centre, would like to have a uniform (shirt or sweater) for staff identifying them as part of the Travel MB team.

Keith McDonald, Thompson Chamber of Commerce

Expressed need for packaging in Thompson and throughout the north. Has worked in hospitality for 25+ years. Would like to see the City of Thompson's accommodation tax directly applied to tourism marketing efforts. There are currently 162 chamber members.

Paul Desjardin, Thompson Unlimited

Thompson Unlimited has a new board of directors and therefore has a wide open slate as it pertains to the organizations efforts. Tourism makes up 25% of the organization's mandate. A tourism coordinator is employed.

Michelle Wallis, MB Tourism Secretariat

A few new programs were introduced this year by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport & Consumer Protection. One being the new Tourism Development Fund. The Dept. has received a good response to this opportunity, with several applications coming in from the north. The MB Star Attraction program was relaunched with defined criteria complementing the Travel MB brand. The Department doesn't want to do one-off projects and would like to see organization's working with the Regional Tourism Association. Has implemented a number of ways to encourage connection between RTAs and attractions, etc. One such way is the requirement of communication with the RTA / support letters for the Tourism Development Fund. No changes to the RTA funding this year.

Penny Byer, Boreal Discovery Centre

Expressed an interest in looking at challenges the north faces and the opportunity to investigate solutions. Posed the question at what point does the Boreal Discovery Centre begin discussions with Tourism North.

Charlene Kissick, CF North Central Development

CFNCD holds the contract to coordinate Tourism North, has been doing so for a number of years, is thankful to the small dedicated group and is looking forward to membership expanding. CFNCD, like the other CFs' mandate is small business start-up and expansion and economic development. CFNCD is busy working on a governance project with the Thompson Multicultural Centre, the development of a northern economic development accord, client work, regular programming, rail communication initiatives, facilitation services and Tourism North. Events coming up in the region include the Fox Lake Cultural Festival in Gillam July 10th and 11th, York Boat Days in Norway House in August, the Cross Lake annual campout and the canoe championships in Cross Lake July 23rd and 24th.

Darryl Villeneuve, MB Tourism Secretariat

Noted the RTAs are the Secretariat's primary link to rural areas, and will often look to the RTAs for feedback on initiatives. The Secretariat has a similar relationship with Travel MB as it does with the RTAs as funding flows to MB's marketing body through this Department.

Marion Morberg, Spirit Way

Introduced Bonnie Bishop (from Memorial University) who is here doing a research project funded by the Tourism Secretariat is focused on the wolf/human dimensions. This summer is second summer of research. The Wolf Exhibit and Wolf Study Centre at the Boreal Study Centre is underway, the wolf habitat is 97% complete. The study centre will include a viewing building and potential study area. The Wolf Capital of the World campaign is moving along (wolf capital logo/brand, council has been struck, looking at business sponsorships). Spirit Way is participating in the Wildlife Society Conference in Winnipeg in 2015 as a gold sponsor.

Spirit Way will have opportunity to speak to the entire conference, participation goals are to promote, research, recruit and network. Spirit Way will include a prize draw of a trip from Winnipeg to Thompson to Churchill in August 2016. Spirit Way information was circulated at the meeting.

Joe Cote, CF Cedar Lake

On average CF Cedar Lake does about 20 loans, last fiscal year was a bit lower with 11 being advanced in the region (representing several communities from Swan River to Wanless). OCN is having their annual Indian Days in August and canoe races. There is a new Asian food truck in The Pas.

Bunny Burke, CF Greenstone

The 100th anniversary of the Hudson Bay mine staking their claim is coming up, there will be a number of events. Flin Flon has a huge art community and has a number of events happening with Culture Days in September. A school of arts has been established – the NorVA Centre.

Geetanjali Pagare, Thompson Unlimited

Work is limited to Thompson, would like to see a help line for people stuck at the rail station. Is working on a signage project for the train station in Thompson.

Volker Beckmann, Spirit Way

Congratulated Tourism North for the work completed on the limited budget and small board. Likes the member base expansion changes and feels Churchill is missing from the equation. There are several VIA Rail issues that need attention. Natural Resources in the area are an asset. There is still a need for a market-ready products. Social Media has changed the way marketing works and is happy to see the efforts to showcase the north being made through online sources.

9. NORTHERN TOURISM DISCUSSION:

Dawn Sands lead the group through a facilitated discussion on Tourism in northern MB, two questions were posed and answers recorded on flipchart paper:

- A) What are Northern Manitoba's greatest assets relating to Tourism:
- *People / Residents (builders, authentic people, culture, Aboriginal)*
 - *Natural Resources*
 - *Fresh air & space*
 - *History (the link to the fur trade, Norway House, York Factory)*
 - *Social Media access and current positive messaging*
 - *Travel MB partnerships*
 - *Wildlife, natural resources, fauna, parks*
 - *Churchill*
 - *Festivals*
 - *Winter activities*
 - *Ski facilities (downhill / cross country)*

- *Skateboarding parks*
- *Diverse artists*

B) What are the main challenges faced by tourism operators in northern Manitoba?

- *VIA Rail communication (no signage, no helpline to call)*
- *Lack of packages to offer*
- *Marketing for tourism destinations*
- *Logistics (distance between communities)*
- *Short on resources / funds to keep Thompson museum open 7 days per week, Flin Flon, Cranberry Portage and other communities / facilities experience similar challenges.*
- *Insurance brokers closed on weekends*
- *Restricted/inconsistent/limited hours for restaurants*
- *Hard to attract staff in hospitality industry (low wages)*
- *Shortened campground season in North*
- *Lack of local operators (regional)*
- *Lack of local cuisine – too many chains*
- *Negative marketing*
- *Lack of affordable housing to support service workers*
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10. NEXT MEETING

The next regular Tourism North meeting will be scheduled for September. The AGM will happen early next fiscal year (April).

11. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 pm.

ATTACHMENT A:
Coordinator Report – Provided by Charlene Kissick

TOURISM NORTH COORDINATOR REPORT – 2014/2015
Submitted at Tourism North AGM – July 7th, 2015

This report provided by Charlene Kissick (for Community Futures North Central Development) to the Tourism North board of directors at the June 2015 AGM. The report outlines CFNCD's tasks completed in relation to Tourism North projects and initiatives for the 2014/2015 fiscal year. CFNCD was pleased to work with Bunny Burke as the Chair representative and the full Tourism North board during the 2014/2015 fiscal year and has entertained a renewed contract in the 2015/2016 year.

2014/2015 OVERVIEW

The 2014/2015 fiscal year was an exciting one with several key successes including distribution in June 2014 of the completely revamped Northern MB Visitor Guide. The format aligned with Travel MB's brand and for the first time ever included trip itineraries and listings of restaurants and outfitters & tours. We were pleased to receive much positive feedback on the new format. The guide generated \$11,353 in ad sales revenue (25 ads) and for the first time Tourism North kept all advertising proceeds and was able to offset the cost of printing. For the 2015/2016 guide, we were happy to include many new photos provided by local northern photographers, many of which were submitted through Tourism North's Request for Photos process.

Tourism North put together an action plan for a unique winter tourism development project and wrapped up some snowmobile trail extension projects that were initiated this year, we worked closely with snowmobile clubs in Thompson and The Pas and for the first time ever had a presence at the SnoMan Congress event held in Winnipeg. A winter visitation survey was conducted and provided some valuable information on how to attract visitors in winter months. Focus on winter visitation stemmed from the 2013 strategic planning session.

Much time was spent reviewing the current bylaws and drafting new ones that would open up membership structure. Our hope is to pass the revised bylaws and move forward with a membership drive following today's AGM.

Website traffic has been consistently increasing and this year we surpassed 20,000 visits! Tourism North's Instagram account has received a lot of attention due to a contest launched in January, engagement has been over 3,500 with 366 entries!

Challenges this year included changes with active membership, limited time allocated to the Tourism Coordinator position and basic geographic difficulties (travel costs and time commitment associated with participating in events based in Southern MB). Tourism North has also found it quite difficult to participate in Travel MB's regional packages. We anticipate the need to get quite creative in the 2015/2016 year in order to balance regular operating, product development initiatives and a membership drive.

COORDINATOR POSITION

Tourism North, requiring a partner to provide project coordination, extended the 2013/2014 contract held with Community Futures North Central Development into the 2014/2015 fiscal year. Receiving annual operating funding from the Province of MB through the Department of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport & Consumer Protection in the amount of \$35,000 allowed for this partnership.

The coordinator was responsible for visitor information services and product development project coordination as directed by the Tourism North Board of Directors identified in the May 2013 Strategic Planning Session. Tourism North designated the Chairperson as the main contact between Tourism North and the coordinator.

A total of 484 hrs were billed this year, totalling \$16,940.00. The current agreement notes a maximum of 430 hours, a further 30 hours were covered by the Winter Tourism Development grant that was awarded.

It should also be noted that 134 hours were provided by CFNCD as inkind when project work results in dual outcomes (ie: event planning, LRI meetings, ½ time charged to Tourism North meetings and meetings with CF clients whose business has a tourism focus, etc.).

2014/2015 PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

Below is a list of projects & initiatives coordinator time was spent working on:

GENERAL:

- Drafting a Letter of Understanding between CFNCD and Tourism North
- Coordination of Planning Session and AGM
- Preparing the 2014/2015 Operational Plan and interim reporting to the Tourism Secretariat
- General office organization, receiving general inquiries, promotion of the organization
- Maintaining events listing for northern Manitoba
- Partnership between Tourism North and other industry players (ie many RTAs, recreational clubs, tourism operators, Travel MB, Tourism Secretariat, Manitoba Lodges and Outfitters, etc.)
- Coordinating Tourism North promotional product purchase and distribution
- Budget preparation
- Tourism North meeting coordination
- Attending industry events and training
- Participation in Thompson Local & Regional Identity meetings and brand launch
- Participation in MRTN meetings, RTA gatherings and Travel MB events (presentation on the North at Visitor Centre information training)
- Work on Tourism Advocacy piece, sharing with Councils, stakeholders, etc

FLAVOUR TRAIL:

- Project input with MRTN members
- Researching unique eateries throughout the region
- Compiling information
- Inclusion of Flavour Trail information in the 2015/2016 guide

REGIONAL TOURISM GUIDE:

- Drafting itineraries, additions and corrections the guide
- Drafting contract between Tourism North and service provider associated with the 2015 regional tourism guide
- Coordination of writing, design, proofreading, printing and distribution of 2015/2016 guide.
- Ad sales for regional guide
- Coordinating request for photos from local photographers
- Guide distribution

VISITOR INFORMATION:

Information packages:

- Receiving general requests for information
- Putting together packages and mail outs for individuals and events
- Assisting with trip planning
- Answering direct questions from the website (ie when does fishing season open, is there a zoo in northern Manitoba, are there campsites at Kwastitchewan Falls, are there canoe rentals, etc.)

Online Presence:

- Regular maintenance and updating of the Tourism North website www.visitnorthernmanitoba.ca.
- Monitoring Tourism North's traffic to the site with Google Analytics. During the 2014/2015 year, the website had 17,981 visitors (an increase of 3,500 visitors from last year!!)
- Compiling monthly and annual website stats reports
- Coordination of updates to the site (Photos & Videos section, notices on homepage featuring events, events listings, new guide download, Instagram button, etc).
- Responding to requests for information, this year 76 requests for information came from the website and tourism packages were mailed out (a significant increase over last year)
- Facebook posts on current Tourism North initiatives (ie: snowmobile trail extension, guides, flavour trail, Instagram contest, Request for Photos, etc)
- Visitors to the website came from 109 different countries
- Traffic was the greatest in the month of July and lowest in November.
- Tourism North Instagram account created last fiscal year, contest launched this year. Engagement of over 3,500 with 366 entries
- Instagram information sheet created for board members

MANITOBA TOURISM AWARDS:

- Preparing nominations for outstanding examples of tourism industry players
- Drafting and circulating a press release featuring the nominees
- Attending awards luncheon

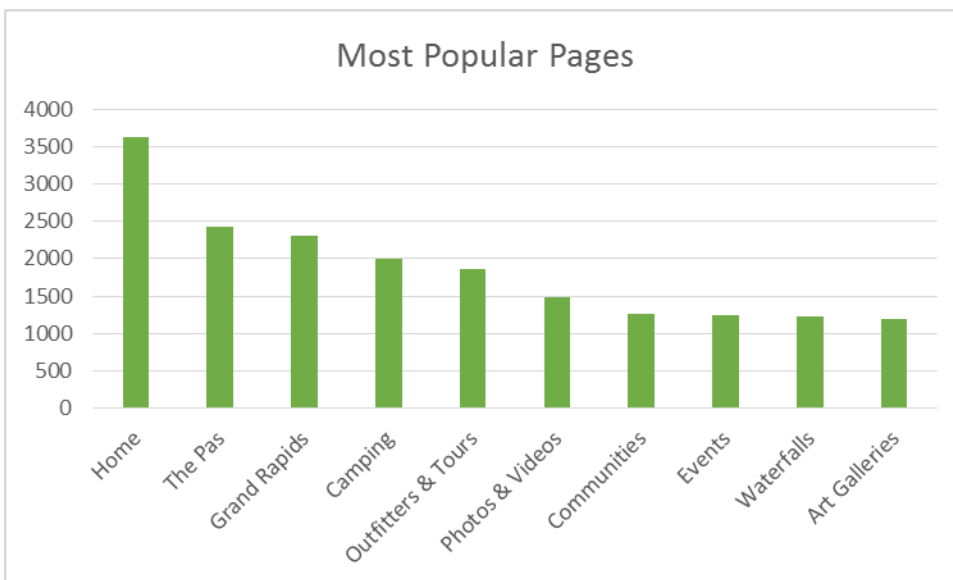
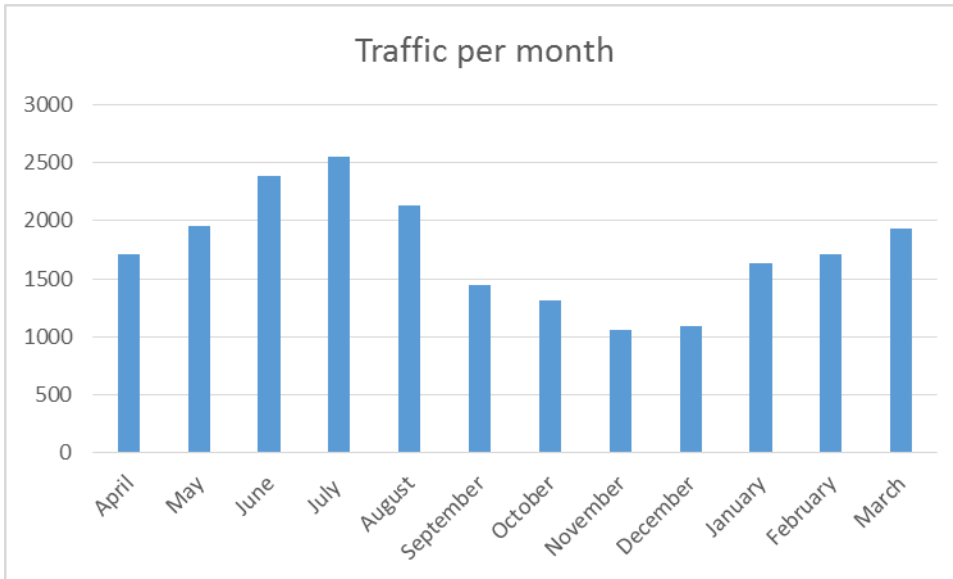
WINTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:

- Completion of Winter Tourism Development – Phase One project which included trail extension work, relationship building with snowmobile clubs in

the region, conducting a winter visitation survey and preparation for continued work.

- Support, advice and liaison with an entrepreneur investigating guided snowmobile tours.
- Drafting concept for a more indepth, year long development project.
- Seeking interest from stakeholders for advisory committee.
- Meetings and communication with snowmobile clubs.
- Proposal development.

**Tourism North website stats:
2014/2015**



Top 10 Countries Visitors are coming from:

1. Canada (16,857)
2. USA (2,418)

3. Brazil (301)
4. United Kingdom (161)
5. Australia (111)
6. Germany (95)
7. Italy (80)
8. France (51)
9. India (46)
10. Mexico (43)

Top 10 cities visitors are coming from:

1. Winnipeg (6726)
2. Thompson (1239)
3. Vancouver (772)
4. Toronto (626)
5. Brandon (524)
6. Calgary (442)
7. Flin Flon (442)
8. Saskatoon (418)
9. The Pas (355)
10. Regina (344)

ATTACHMENT B:
Treasurer's Report – Provided by Bunny Burke
